

Federal Government employees, including counterterrorism agents in the FBI, for example, no border agents.

Before we default, we could have time to make this sign for all points of entry. This is the tip of the iceberg. That is a symbol of things we definitely could not afford to do.

That does not even address the global economic impacts of playing it so close to the edge. The dollar would be devalued, our credit rating would be downgraded. It would cost us much more—much more—to borrow and to pay the interest on our debt, and thus our debt would actually increase.

More importantly, all adjustable interest rates would rise, including credit cards and mortgages and student loans. New loans, of course, would be more expensive. These impacts could have a legacy that dogs us for decades, if not centuries.

This is serious business and we should not be testing this deadline. Yet that is exactly what some of my colleagues are doing. I worry that Republicans in the House are blind to research, deaf to reason, and are simply ignoring facts that are contrary to what they want to hear.

Throughout this debate, conservative House Republicans have stood in the way of a deal. We have offered them some pretty sweet deals, and they have walked away. They treated the August 2 deadline as advisory, as optional. They suggest that the Treasury can figure out something to prevent a default.

Now they are opposing Senator REID's sensible deficit reduction plan because of how it calculates some of its savings. Specifically at issue is the Reid plan's \$1 trillion in savings from winding down the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which Republicans are calling a budgetary gimmick, not real savings.

Yet the Ryan budget, which almost every House and Senate Republican voted for, counted the same cuts almost identically. So to say it is real savings in the Ryan plan but fake savings in the Reid proposal—I am sorry, but you cannot have it both ways.

Further, Senator REID's plan is actually all cuts. I do not necessarily like that. It contains dollar for dollar spending cuts to match the debt ceiling increase. And as much as I do not like this aspect of it, it does not include any revenues, even though a Washington Post-ABC News poll says that 72 percent of the American public believe we should have those making over \$250,000 pay more—72 percent.

But a cuts-only plan is what Republicans have been saying they wanted all along. Now we have given it to them, we have it out there, it is there, and all of the cuts in the Reid plan have been supported by Republicans in the past. So we are presenting a plan that is all cuts, no revenue. The pretense they are using to reject it does not pass the smell test. According to CBO, it saves \$1.3 trillion more in sav-

ings than the Boehner plan, such as it is. You know, I often hear Republicans say corporations are sitting on trillions of dollars of cash instead of investing, expanding, and creating jobs, because businesses are facing so much uncertainty. Well, Senator REID's plan offers certainty.

But suddenly Republicans want a short-term deal, one that would very well put us in this same crisis again in 6 months. What kind of certainty is that? No, a short-term deal will not offer our businesses and markets the certainty they need. A short-term deal may very well induce a credit downgrade, according to Standard & Poor's. Yet Republicans say they prefer a short-term deal over Senator REID's plan, which would take us through the end of next year.

I do not get it. It sounds to me as though they care more about politics and winning than they do about their constituents' well-being and the prosperity and economic security of the Nation. Their hard line and cavalier attitude is frankly dangerous—very dangerous.

Playing fast and loose with the facts is reckless. The American people deserve better. We need to raise the debt ceiling now, and Leader REID has shown us the way forward. I do not like all of the cuts in his package. I wish there were increases in revenue from those who can afford it. But I know we have to pass it because it will keep us from defaulting, and it will do so responsibly and sensibly.

We owe it to the American people to pull back from the brink and pass the Reid plan so we can avert disaster. We owe it to our constituents, and we owe it to our children.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the FAA bill. On Friday, authorization for the Federal Aviation Administration was allowed to expire. Four thousand workers were placed on furlough. The airport and airways trust fund now lacks the authority to collect user fees that fund air traffic services, airport maintenance, and other things that Americans rely on.

Let's be clear. This should not have happened. It happened because a few Members of the other body made a conscious choice to negotiate in bad faith. Clear and simple.

Let me recap it. Under the able leadership of Senator ROCKEFELLER, the

Senate again passed our long-term FAA authorization in February, with a bipartisan vote of 87 to 8. Later, the House passed its bill, but largely along party lines.

In April, the Senate named conferees to negotiate a final bill. However, our friends in the House have yet to appoint conferees to join us at the negotiating table.

Meanwhile, since 2007, we have passed 20 extensions to allow this program to continue operating while we work to negotiate a long-term solution. Not a single one of those extensions has been met with controversy—not one.

However, as we undertook what should have been the latest clean extension, the House unexpectedly eliminated 13 rural airports that rely on Essential Air Service just days before the authorization expired. The House refused to reconsider and chose instead to shut down the Federal Aviation Administration.

The House seeks to save approximately one-tenth of 1 percent of overall aviation spending by attacking essential air services. I agree with anyone who wants to control Federal spending and invest in real priorities—we all do—but it simply doesn't make sense to focus on saving fractions of pennies on the dollar instead of coming to the negotiating table to hammer out long-term solutions.

At the same time, the House rejected an opportunity to protect our troops from exorbitant baggage fees. Congressman NICK RAHALL introduced an amendment to the House extension that would have prohibited air carriers from charging a baggage fee for members of the Armed Forces while traveling on official military duty, especially those checking four or fewer bags. In one instance, an airline reportedly socked a poor servicemember with a baggage fee of \$3,000. Regrettably, the House rejected this offer to protect our troops, and the rejection was on a party-line vote. Those of us negotiating in good faith here in the Senate were left scratching our heads. The House would reject a clean extension to save a mere one-tenth of 1 percent by attacking rural jobs and commerce, but it would reject an opportunity to protect our troops from getting gouged by baggage fees on the same bill. It doesn't make sense.

Later, we learned through the press that the House's erratic strategy had apparently nothing to do with potential cost savings at all, but, instead, these antics were about rulemaking by the National Mediation Board. This is a labor issue that has nothing to do with essential air service and nothing to do with the daily operations of the Federal Aviation Administration, both of which could be operating right now under a clean extension. This labor issue should be worked out in a conference—the conference committee we can't have because the House has yet to name conferees.

One of the rural communities the House Members chose to cut down as a

political pawn is Glendive, MT. Glendive is growing in the energy sector. It is in the Bakken formation, with lots of oil and gas wells drilled, and it is a huge potential new energy source. Energy companies from Texas and Louisiana are rapidly sending personnel up to Glendive, and hotels in the area are running at near-full occupancy year-round. We are working hard to quickly build housing and infrastructure in order to capitalize on this great opportunity to create much needed jobs. Today, unemployment in Glendive is half the national average. But Glendive is located 230 miles from any larger airport. Glendive needs essential air service to maintain its lifeline to national commerce and continue to grow and create jobs.

We can discuss at length the merits of essential air service, the promise made to rural America, and the lifeline it provides to towns such as Glendive. In fact, this is a conversation we should have. Any changes should be made as part of thoughtful and transparent discussion, with input from the folks on the ground who are most affected. Again, that is precisely what conference negotiations are for—yet, again, negotiations we can't hold. Why? Because the House has yet to name its conferees.

The House antics have halted as much as \$2.5 billion in airport funding—funding that employs as many as 87,000 workers on construction projects around the country. At Glacier International Airport in Kalispell, MT, much needed upgrades to the taxiway are now on hold indefinitely, and so are the much needed construction jobs this project would support.

Even more troubling, 4,000 mothers and fathers and breadwinners are now out of work. These are folks such as Kristina Richardson, an administrative support specialist at Billings Logan International Airport's air traffic control tower. Over the weekend, Kristina wasn't able to go grocery shopping. She didn't know if she could count on her next paycheck to buy food and pay her bills. Kristina described the pit in her stomach when she went in to clean off her desk and shut down her computer. Kristina told my office she worried about who would help the people she had been working with. She described the pride and fulfillment that comes from working and the blow that comes when that is taken away.

Luckily, Kristina was told on Tuesday she would be able to return to work. But 4,000 other folks across the country haven't been so lucky. Like most Montanans, Kristina is one tough lady, and she understands the vital importance of essential air service to rural communities. Even when she thought she had been furloughed, she hung in there. She contacted my office to voice her support for a clean FAA extension that rejects arbitrary cuts to rural communities.

I am increasingly concerned about the nature of our political discourse.

Lately, it seems some folks are more focused on making 30-second sound bites than making laws. What happened with the FAA bill is an example of this misguided focus. Whatever the House's true reason for suspending 4,000-plus jobs and halting construction to improve airport safety, it just wasn't right.

Still, I know we can do good things around here when we work together, and I hold out the hope that we will return our focus to what is important and start getting work done, and it is not just here but on debt extension and a lot of major matters around here. But in the meantime, we need to fix this mess. This is easier to fix—much easier.

Along with Senator ROCKEFELLER, I introduced a clean FAA extension that would put 4,000 employees back to work, let us start construction projects around the country to create jobs and improve the safety of our airports, and continue to fund the trust fund. Then together we can continue working on a longer term solution. I urge my colleagues to support a clean extension.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE DEBT CEILING

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, we have three separate issues facing the Congress. First, the authority of the Treasury Department to borrow to meet the Nation's obligations will be reached on Tuesday. In order for borrowing to continue after Tuesday, Congress needs to raise the debt ceiling. That is the first of the three issues.

The second issue we face is the need to help our economy to become prosperous again. Unfortunately, the debate in Congress has totally lost sight of this issue, the issue of how we can grow the economy and how we can create jobs.

The third of the three issues is the need to put in place a long-term plan to reduce the deficit and the debt. The issue of raising the debt ceiling and reducing the long-term deficit and debt have, unfortunately, come to be seen by many in Congress as a single issue. So I want to urge all colleagues to take a step back and to recognize, first, that these issues are separate and, second, that failure to responsibly deal with the first of these issues; that is, failure to raise the debt limit, will greatly hamper our ability to deal with the other two issues that I mentioned.

The failure to raise the debt limit will not return our economy to pros-

perity; instead, it will postpone the day when that prosperity returns. Failure to raise the debt limit will not help reduce our debt and deficit. It will add to the debt and deficit by raising interest rates for the government and for all Americans.

So let's review how we got here.

Since the beginning of this Congress nearly 7 months ago, the Republican majority in the House has had a laser focus on one issue; that is, cutting spending. To achieve that objective, the first strategy adopted by the Republican leadership in the House was to threaten a shutdown of the government unless sufficient spending cuts were agreed to. Spending cuts were agreed to, and at the final hour Republicans agreed to pass the bill that was needed to fund the government for the balance of the fiscal year. By that I mean through September 30 of this year.

So as soon as that crisis was averted and the threat to close down the government was behind us, at least for a few months, the effort shifted to a new strategy. This strategy was to threaten a first-in-history default by the government on its financial obligations if enough additional spending cuts were not agreed to; that is, spending cuts in addition to what were agreed to, in order to avert a shutdown of the government. The device for bringing about that default was refusal to extend the debt ceiling when the government's borrowing authority was scheduled to be reached August 2, next Tuesday.

We should remind ourselves of what an artificial device is being used for leverage in this negotiation. Congress passes the laws that determine how much revenue the Federal Government collects, and Congress passes the laws that determine how much we obligate the government to spend. When the revenue we collect is less than the amount we are committed to spend, the Secretary of the Treasury has no alternative but to borrow money to meet the obligations that Congress has taken on.

So in a period like today, when the government is receiving in revenues much less than is required to meet its obligations, there are two logical actions for Congress to take. First, it can raise more revenue; second, it can reduce the obligations of the government. But in refusing to allow the Secretary of the Treasury to borrow, we are taking neither of these logical steps. Instead, we are telling the Secretary of the Treasury to default on the obligations which this and previous Congresses have already taken on on behalf of the American people.

We are told by the Secretary of the Treasury that unless Congress acts he will be forced to default or renege on our obligations beginning next week, August 2. The refusal to raise the debt ceiling and the threatening of default on our obligations has achieved much of what Republicans set out to achieve in this Congress. It has precipitated a crisis and in order to avoid that crisis,